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Exiles Vs. Duvalier: Here Are the Odds

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Militarily, the problem of the Haitian exiles looks puny compared to the problem of the Cuban exiles.

While Cuba is the second-ranking military power in this hemisphere, Haiti could hardly be called any power at all.

The Francois Duvalier dictatorship, recognized as the most oppressive in the western hemisphere, controls the 4.5 million Haitians with a combination of terror, black magic and a military lightly armed and concerned about its ammunition supply.

But the exiles are fewer in number and even more poorly armed and supplied. Their strongest weapons are courage and sympathy from the Haitian population generally, plus anything from knives to light machine guns.

Both the government and the exiles are trying to get more weapons. The first to gain substantial success will have the other in trouble, with the odds in favor of the government.

The exiles, who have launched two separate guerrilla bands into Haiti's southern peninsula since June, feel the acceleration of their movement was crippled severely when an \$11,000 load of arms intended for them was intercepted by customs agents in Miami early in September.

Exiled Haitian Catholic priest Father Jean Baptiste Georges, coordinator of the Haitian Armed Forces for Revolution (FARH), sponsor of the two guerrilla landings, was charged in that case and still faces prosecution.

Another Haitian, Dr. Carlo Mevs, was picked up by customs agents late in September and some \$100,000 in arms seized as they were being loaded aboard planes. These arms were believed

headed for Duvalier. The Haitian government later persuaded the U.S. State Department to secure Mevs' release, although it denied endorsement of his activities.

It is understood that other Duvalier attempts to buy arms in this hemisphere have been rebuffed, and that some European governments are declining to sell arms to him.

So for the moment at least the revolution against Duvalier and his efforts to control it look like a walking race.

A U.S. ban on arms shipments to Haiti, under which the Mevs' shipment was stopped, apparently has been circumvented at least once. Two T-28's, planes considered ideal for action against guerrillas, are reported to have been smuggled out of the U.S. Southwest to Duvalier. The U.S. is reported to have asked that the planes be returned because they were obtained illegally, but Duvalier still has them.

Including the two T-28's, Duvalier 200-man Air Force also has four P-51's (although only one has been seen operating recently), two AT-6's, three C-47's (used by the Haitian airlines) and one small, twin-engine light plane.

The 5,000-man army, whose leadership has been juggled frequently by Duvalier as insurance against coups, is reported to have four light U.S. tanks bought from Italy in 1959-60, two half-track personnel carriers armed with .50 caliber machine guns, few heavy weapons and a variety of lighter ones. The government recently commandeered all four-wheel-drive vehicles in the country for use by the military. The army is believed to include one tactical battalion armed with M-1 rifles, mortars and machine guns.

The 300-man Navy, or Coast Guard, has two subchasers and a number of smaller craft.

The 8,500-man militia, armed primarily with carbines, rifles or submachine-guns, a 500-man palace guard, and a force of TonTon Macoutes (or hoggymen, Duvalier's personal police force which has license to steal and kill) whose estimates range from 1,000 up. The TTMs usually carry a .38 or .45 caliber pistol.

The bulk of the forces are deployed in Port Au Prince, to protect the palace, where Duvalier stores his munitions supplies in the basement. Ammunition is dispensed sparingly, both because of Duvalier's suspicions of everyone around him and because it is in short supply.

Some \$2 million of this equipment technically belongs to the U.S., brought in under the military assistance program and administered by the U.S. Marine mission which operated there on invitation from Duvalier from 1958 to

1963. Duvalier expelled the mission, but the arms remain.

But with all this, Duvalier remains vulnerable. In 1958, a small band led by two former Dade County (Miami) deputy sheriffs landed at Port Au Prince and very nearly took over the country. His forces are believed less likely to support him now than then.

Military observers say that some Cuban exile groups, building up commando forces to strike at Fidel Castro, have the capability now of overthrowing Duvalier in one quick stroke.

There has been a lot of talk about cooperation between the Cuban and Haitian exiles — Cuban arms in exchange for Haitian bases for operations against Cuba.

But the Cubans, who have bombarded the press and radio for several years with pronouncements about preserving freedom and democracy in this hemisphere, so far have declined to help.

In addition to these, there